



IDENTITY OF MANIPUR IN THE EPIC MAHABHARATA

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ABSTRACT

In the epic Mahabharata, we find description of many expeditions of the Pandava towards the eastern side of India, at different times and on different occasions. Geographically, the present North-East region of India forms a belt of transition between the social and cultural life of peninsular India and the other countries of Southern – Asia. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee said regarding the influence of the epic in this region that by the middle of 4th century CE, the traditions of Mahabharata spreaded amongst the Indo Mongoloids of ancient Assam (S.K. Chatterjee, Kirata Jana Kristi, Axom publishing company, 2021, page – 82) In this paper should try to identity of Manipur in the epic Mahabharata.

Methodology Used: Through analytical methodology we try to reach the topic.

KEYWORDS: Manipur, Epic, North-East, Mahabharata, Social, Historical

INTRODUCTION

Manipur a beautiful and historical place of North-East India, which has a great and rich heritage of culture from ancient times. In the epic Mahabharata, we find that Manipur how an important identity Chitrangada and Babrubahana, wife and son of thirth Pandava Arjuna. In this context the episode of Arjuna marring Chitrangada, the princes of Manipur. In the Aswamedha Parva, we find that when Arjuna was defeated by his son Babrubavana, Krishna sent in the precious Sonjibani stone to be brought from Ulupi. Hence it is evident that the Kingdom of Ulupi and the Chitrangada were very near to each other and the epic writer had definitely some purpose to depict the characters of these two princesses from nearly kingdom to marry Arjuna. The description in the above episodes which reflect the rituals of these marginal chiefdoms would definitely indicate the cultural legacies born by these ethnic groups.

From other perspective, reference of Manipur in the epic Mahabharata is significant too. Here existence of some social systems which were not in tune with the vedic tradition such type of traditions attaining close attention from the epic writer. For example the characters of Ulupi and Chitrangada are strong evidences of female characters breaking the patriarchal idiom at a very early age. These characters are bold, independent and self sufficient personalities unlike the other female characters in the epic. It is an example which proved the society depicted as belonging to these characters bear elements of a distinctly alien culture. We will have to analyze the geographical reference about Manipur available in the epic, the people and the culture described which might rare been avoided consciously or unconsciously by the epic writers due to the canonical pre-eminence.

We have found the references of Manipur in Adiparva and Aswamedha parva of the epic Mahabharata. Arjuna's coming

to Manipur is described in chapter 214 of Adiparva. Arjuna coming down from the great Himalayas started moving towards the east:

“Anuburbena tirthani dristan kurasatvama
Nadisotpalining ramyamaranyamnoimshang pratih
Nandamopo ranandangeka koushiking cha yaskachinim
Mahanading gayang choiva gangamopi cha bharatah”
(Mahabharata, Adiparva, Ch 214, Sloka 6-7)

Arjuna after seeing Chitrangada roaming freely in the town, becomes attracted to her and approaches Chitrabahana, father of Chitrangada and seek consent for marriage her. At that time Chitrabahana told Arjuna that he always consider Chitrangada as his son. The first son he will have in her womb will be the bride price he need to give. This is important because the custom of bride price did not exist amongst the Vedic Aryan in the upper tragetic Valley, According to this commitment, Babrubahana was born and Arjuna kept his pledge of giving bride price to Chitrabahana by donating his son to be the heir of Manipur.

Manipur appeared in the epic for the second time, long after the first coming of Arjuna, at the time of AswamedhaYajna after the victory of kurukhetra, Arjuna embarked in the land of Manipur in chapter 79 of Aswamedhparva. The re-union of father and son in chapter 79 is a passionate scene described in exquisite poetry.

CONCLUSION

As describe about Manipur in the epic, people come to know the social rituals, customs, culture, of this place, which have a special identity. People can know the similarity of topography and life style in this region with those from the eastern and northern part of India.

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